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Dear friends,

When change swept Eastern Europe in the late 1980's, I sensed a great opportunity. Since World War II, the Jewish population had disappeared in this region. But I had a dream ... to revitalize those Jewish communities in the cities and towns of a region that, for centuries, were synonymous with Jewish life. Due to the twin forces of Nazism and then Communism, they were physically and spiritually decimated.

So I opened Jewish schools and assumed responsibility for supporting them, even for guaranteeing their existence. In Budapest and Warsaw, Prague and Moscow, young Jews began to learn about the glories of their past, and the promise of their future.

One of the most important principles in Jewish life is the assumption of responsibility. Fully mature individuals and communities are those who take responsibility for themselves and, when necessary, for others. Recognizing this is what led me to create my Foundation and open my schools.

But therein also lay a challenge. How could I teach the importance of assuming responsibility in schools that were dependent not on themselves and their own communities, but on me and on other people halfway around the world?

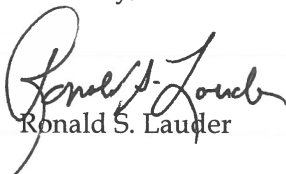
It was then that I realized that my Foundation needed to aim, not only to graduate children from schools, but graduate the schools from my Foundation. When a community developed the values and the ability to care for itself and for its schools, then my vision would be fulfilled.

Twenty-eight years after creating my Foundation, I am so proud to witness the graduation of a school from our Foundation. The Reut School in Bucharest is now ready - the first of our schools to fully grow up and stand on its own feet.

This day is so important to me, not only because it fulfills my vision of teaching Jews to assume responsibility for themselves and for the important things in their lives and the lives of their communities, but because it frees resources that can now be applied to support other schools, in other cities. All those in Bucharest, who have made this day possible, share in the merit of the next school we will support and nurture. This fulfills another important edict of our people - Jews taking care of other Jews and helping them.

I therefore thank everyone who has assumed responsibility for this beautiful school, and wish them much continued success.

Sincerely,


Ronald S. Lauder